An Inaugural Dissertation
on
Disease.

Presented to the Faculty
of the
Homoeopathic Medical College
of
Pennsylvania
for the
Degree of Doctor of Medicine.

by

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Philadelphia, Pa., February — 1867.

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From time immemorial disease has been one of the most prolific sources of sorrow to man. From time immemorial has man been concerned, with more or less wisdom, in endeavoring to destroy or avoid the curse. It was co=eval with his existence, and seems to have increased with his intelli=gence. For a thousand years be=fore the Christian aera we read of the superstitious efforts of those be=

nighted periods for the relief of the bodily afflicted.

From the time of Mercury, who, tradition says, was taught the art of venesection by the Hippopolamous (worthy origin of a barbarous practice) through the period of Aesculapious, — whose mystery-clad temples, that filled with trembling awe the ignorant of the age, were the first great schools of medicine among the Greeks; — down to the appearance of Hippocrates, — whose name shall live until is heard the death-knell of disease itself, and whose writings are the earliest chronicles of disease transmitted to the present time, — we have no knowledge but our gleanings from fabulous history.

The writings of Hippocrates swayed the medical world until the time of Celsus, the first native Roman who wrote on medicine. Galen, who first conceived and demonstrated that the arteries and veins contained blood instead of air, succeeded. He was followed by Paracelsus, who first administered mercury internally in the Fifteenth century. Servetus, who first demonstrated the circulation of the blood, and was rewarded with death at the stake, with his books around him to feed the flames, was the next writer of note. The weak point of all was in giving to disease a material, individual existence; and here the next great writer and discoverer

Hahneman, differs from his predecessors, and launches out boldly from the beaten track, and makes a stride in medical progress that astonishes the thinking world.

To us as physicians disease is a most interesting topic. The relations between the physician and disease are anomalous. The physician is essentially the enemy of disease, while disease is one of his best friends. His great aim is to combat, and, if possible, destroy the hydraheaded monster; while upon it he depends for a too often precarious subsistence. Like the true soldier, he is eager for the approach of the enemy, that he may measure his strength. And,

when Homoeopathy shall have been perfected, he may, like Alexander, weep for more disease to cure.

What is disease? We should first know what is health. Perfect health is a condition unknown in man's present degenerate state; and therein is man less perfect than the inferior works of creation. Therein is shown the curse of knowledge misused - of talents perverted. As an instance of this, I believe one of the chief sources - the chief source, indeed - of disease to originate in the abuse of the sexual system. Man, by means of his superior intelligence; by having partaken of the fruit of knowledge, - is enabled to imagine, plan, and seek sexual indulgence, often

unnaturally, and, unless restrained by reason and self-respect, nearly always to excess, thereby sapping the vitality and inducing disease. Our limited space will not allow of a free discussion of all that might be interesting on this subject. Health, as we know it is only comparative, no universal line can be drawn between that and disease. Individuals estimate health by different standards. One considers himself healthy with ailments that would cause another, with a more perfect condition, much uneasiness, but he has become so accustomed to them that he knows no better, or considers them natural phenomena.

Disease is defined by Hebler

as "Any deviation from health in function or structure" Webster is acknowledged authority on the signification of words of the English language in general, but as no man is so well versed in the workings of morbific influences in the human organism as the Physician, we must have recourse to medical authors on this subject. Dr. Dunglison is the most prominent of these in our country. He says disease is "an opposite state to that of health, consisting in a change either in the position and structure of parts, or in the exercise of one or more of their functions, or in both." This would lead to the belief that disease is something, distinct and tangible, existing in man as an entity, separate from the organism, and the vital

principle which annihilates it. But Dr. Dunglison is an Allopath, and his a decidedly Allopathic definition; and as such, is to be looked upon with suspicion by all Homoeopaths; if from no other reason than the fact that he defines Homoeopathy to be "a fanciful doctrine, which maintains that disordered actions in the human body are to be cured by inducing other disordered actions of a like kind," &c. And, of course, all who teach, practice, or believe in Homoeopathy, are fanciful people. In short, he, in his wisdom, brands Hahneman, the venerable, persecuted discoverer, Boenninghausen, and our honored faculty,- his deacciples and our teachers,- and we, their pupils,- brands all as fools or

knaves:- fools for believing this "fanciful doctrine," or, knaves for teaching or practicing a deceit. This bears a patent lie on its face. And if false in part, we may question the whole.

Hahneman says that in disease "the vital power alone is primarily disturbed, and expresses its sufferings, (internal changes) by abnormal changes in the sensations and actions of the system."

All evidence on the subject is necessarily negative, with man's present means of knowledge.

We, as believers in and practitioners of Homoeopathy, understand disease to be:- a disturbed action of the vital power, rendered appreciable

to our senses through the medium of the material body. It matters not to us what the invisible, inappreciable thing is that acts, or what it acts upon. We need not to know by what means the sensations of hunger and thirst are produced in order to relieve them; they are the symptoms - the outcryings of the vitality for what it needs. Just so is it in disease - the symptoms point to the remedy. and the totality of the symptoms are to us, practically, the disease.

The first symptoms of improvement in disease, under the action of a Homoeopathic remedy, are invariably internal. It destroys the disease by attacking first its source; and the first indications we have that the remedy is

at work, are found in the improved tone of the mind. So, also, to a practiced observer the approach of disease is nearly always heralded by a change in the moral condition, by a vague uneasiness and lowness of spirits.

We know that an emotion will produce disease and even death. The records of numerous cases of some the severest forms of fevers show that they are not infrequently produced by intense mental emotions. But an emotion can have no effect, directly, upon the body,- the grosser, material part of our nature,- it cannot break a limb or fracture a skull. There must, then, be some medium, spiritual it may be, for these, materially speaking, "nothings" to act upon. This we call the vital or dynamic power, the

intelligence, the life principle, the soul, or what not? and the phenomena we see – the symptoms – are but the effects of this action.

And here we find a silencing argument against the objections of those who ridicule the pellet, and infinitesimal dose, and who cannot comprehend the profounder reasonings in favor of the Homoeopathic law – who cannot grasp the comprehensive meaning of the philosophical axiom – "matter is indestructible." For they must acknowledge that an emotion is capable of inducing disease, even unto death, and, also, of checking and removing ailments brought on by other emotions. And how much less, materially, is an emotion than our "highest" potences? "None so blind as those, &c.

As our sole object is to heal the sick, and not to build up speculative theories which carry us beyond the reach of possible proof or any practical use, it becomes us not to waste our time and energies in a fruitless search within the internal organism for this disturbed vital power, or its *modus operandi* in producing disease, which reason and experience teach us can result in nothing of practical use; but to accept and use the means an all-wise and just Creator has placed within the scope of our limited understandings.

God has revealed to all his creatures, through his unmistakable book of nature, everything necessary for their guidance through natural life, if they will be but satisfied with his laws. so

revealed, and observe them. His laws are all intimately interwoven, and inseparably connected with his works, so that they are ever before our eyes. Upon a breach of these laws, moral or physical, is entailed inevitable proportionate punishment. Nor are they dependent upon the art of man for their transmission from generation to generation. Within each soul God has implanted an index pointing to right and wrong, and their respective consequences, and has left with that soul the choice. To assert the contrary would be to say that we might be punished, even with death, for the breach of a law, our knowledge of which depended upon erring man;- that the laws of the Infinite depended, for their perpetuation upon the works of the finite;-

that the Creator was not all-wise, all-just, omnipotent.

Incalculable mischief results from the blind practice of the old school, and their apers in the new, of treating disease by a name, irrespective of what they call minor symptoms, which are to us the most significant land-marks in the wilderness of pathology. It is impossible for man, with his limited vision, to see the precise condition of the internal organs. Yet upon this presumed knowledge they base their treatment; and as an inevitable consequence the most disastrous mistakes are committed. They shut their ears to the outcryings of suffering nature, and give no heed to the language of the symptoms, which alone could lead them to a correct knowledge

of the case. I would beg leave to think, however, that we, as beginners, should not totally lose sight of the names of disease. We should have an easier starting point than the great mass of disconnected symptoms. We must generalize to a degree, in order the better to individualize. In the same disease, so-called, in different patients, the groups of symptoms are always more or less similar. Like causes, under like circumstances, produce like effects. Scarlet-fever, for example, is always characterized by groups of well-known and peculiar symptoms, differing, to be sure, in different individuals, but having a characteristic resemblance in the main. There are appropriate groups of remedies in our Materia Medica to meet these indications; while there

is a vast number of others that are but very seldom, if ever, indicated; and when they are, their "Key-notes" are so prominent we cannot mistake them. Would it not be well, then for us to be acquainted with these groups? It would narrow down, as it were, the wilderness of remedies to select from, which is so confounding and discouraging to beginners. Of course, we have but just acquired the alphabet of our science and the Materia Medica here at College; and as we become more conversant, by practice, with the indications for the remedies, we can, by degrees, dispense with pathology, and be guided altogether by the symptoms, which, we all must acknowledge, is the only true application of the Homoeopathic law; and to depend

in the least — or generalizing is an acknowledgment of ignorance; but we are all ignorant until we learn.

There is nothing in a name; but there may be in the idea it conveys; and whether we apply the name "disease" to the influence disturbing the dynamic vital power, or to the appreciable symptoms — its effects — the result with the true Homoeopath, will be the same.

Unconsciously we gather around names clusters of associations to the extent that their original meaning becomes totally obscured, till at length the term that expressed a quality becomes the name of an individual; and the name that once called up the image of an individual man, now conveys the

idea of a virtue or a vice. Thus: "Nero" which at one period applied to a man of certain dimensions, now as often expresses unscrupulous cruelty. "Arnold" is, by common consent, the synonym for selfishness and treachery. And "Hahneman," years hence, will present to the mind not only the picture of an old man, with bent and thoughtful brow, toiling in want and exile, to develop a natural law for our guidance in the healing art; but it will also indicate the origin of the germ of a revolution, destined to overturn all the preceding erroneous theories and practices of medicine; and rob afflicted man of half the ills his flesh is heir to.